

## **WARMINGTON: Calling them 'Nazis,' pastor kicks police out of church at Easter**

*Calgary Police explained “one uniformed member of the Calgary Police Service attended” public health and local bylaw officers*

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Joe Warmington



A Calgary pastor called police officers "Nazis" after his Easter ceremonies were interrupted over the weekend. Photo by Artur Pawlowski

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Pastor Artur Pawlowski said he called law enforcement “Nazis” because it looked like the kind of armed raid of his church at Easter he heard about as a kid in Poland.

“I grew up under communism and my grandparents lived under the Nazis,” said the Calgary pastor. “My family escaped the communists in Poland and first went to Greece and then to Canada to get away from it. There were millions of Jewish people murdered in Poland including at Auschwitz.”

Calgary Police said in a statement said there was a “concern” that Pawlowski and his The Fortress (Cave) of Adullam congregation “were not adhering to the government’s COVID-19 public health orders.”

A video of the Saturday incident shows the pastor telling authorities to get “out of this property” while calling officials “Nazis” as well as “gestapo” and “communists” as he demanded they not return without a warrant.

Having received numerous tickets during the COVID-19 pandemic, Pawlowski tells the Toronto Sun he drew the line at guns in his church. “This is a place of worship and no place for weapons,” said the 48-year pastor, husband and father of three who is a street pastor in Calgary — his home since coming to Canada in 1995. “We have people praying here. They were scaring the kids. This was passover. This is Easter.”

Growing up with this history, he said, evokes horrible memories.

“I was a witness to beatings during the Solidarity movement,” he said. “My grandparents told me about those who were just following orders.”

In a news release Calgary Police explained “one uniformed member of the Calgary Police Service attended a call to assist our partner agencies, Alberta Health Services and City of Calgary Bylaw services, in relation to a religious gathering being held at the Street Church.”

Calgary Police added “in attending public spaces, private homes, and businesses, we continue to strive for voluntary compliance with public health orders where that makes sense.”

Going into a church over Easter weekend did not make any sense to Pawlowski.

“The organizer of the gathering was uncooperative with the health inspector, and repeatedly raised his voice asking all parties to leave the premises, which they did approximately one minute after entry and in a peaceful manner,” said police. “No tickets were issued at the time and it will be up to our partner agencies to determine subsequent enforcement activity in response to this situation.”

Dora Paolo serves Jo-Anne Park (L) fish and chips on Good Friday at Timothy's pub on Browns Line in Etobicoke. The province is shutting down many businesses at 12:01 a.m. Saturday morning for the next 28 days on Friday, April 2, 2021.

Instead of more escalation they could just give Pawlowski his ticket Tuesday, after the holy celebrations are over if authorities believe the church violated public health orders.

Aylmer Police have taken this approach with Church of God pastor Henry Hildebrandt by going to his house during the week. Brantford Police Saturday waited until a demonstration of 2,000 people unveiling a new anti-lockdown billboard was over and pulled over Hildebrandt to issue his ticket on his way out of town.

Whether or not people agree with ticketing clergy and congregates who attend religious services in violation of COVID-19 orders, de-escalation tactics avoid embarrassing viral videos like this one or the take down with stun guns deployed of a young man playing shinny hockey on a Calgary rink.

There's got to be a better way. It needs to be said because it does feel that things are escalating there because this is the same pastor who has had conflict with police over him feeding the homeless in Calgary during this pandemic.

“I am trying to stop suicides and help people in despair,” said Pawlowski. “I just want to be left alone. I just want to be able to do my job to try to help people and save lives.”

The authorities just want him to follow the provincial laws.

Perhaps now that Easter is over, they can sit down together away from a place of worship and talk about it with no guns and no names called?

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